



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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While generally maintaining last year's production levels, the U.S. fishing industry, hard hit by the war, is falling considerably behind its 1943 production goals, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes said today.

He revealed that production figures for the first six months of year show few important increases but pointed out that the first half of the year normally accounts for only one fourth of the total production of fishery products and that the fishing industry still has ample opportunity to materially increase its production over last year's totals.

Landings of fresh fish at the ports of Boston, Gloucester, and Portland for the first half of the year amounted to an estimated 133,900,000 pounds. This compares with 185,900,000 pounds for the like period of 1942, and 224,300,000 pounds for the first half of 1941.

California tuna receipts furnish a bright spot. Landings totaled 35,200,000 pounds as against 25,300,000 for the first half of 1942. While tuna receipts have been climbing from low levels of last year, they are still much lower than in pre-war years. In the first half of 1940, for instance, California tuna receipts were 80,400,000 pounds.

The pack of canned tuna has shown a corresponding increase over last year: 713,309 cases as against 532,159. All of this year's tuna pack will go to civilians.

Shrimp receipts in the Gulf area were up slightly, from 100,397 barrels to 101,738. Due to high prices for fresh shrimp and increased demand, as well as to difficulties in obtaining sufficient cannery labor, a smaller percentage of the shrimp production went into cans than the first six months of 1942. During the first 6 months of this year, South Atlantic and Gulf state packers, who report to the Pure Food and Drug Administration, canned 63,186 cases compared with 122,540 for the similar period of 1942. As is the case with a number of other important fisheries, however, by far the largest shrimp production takes place in the last half of the year and it is still possible for the industry to surpass last year's production totals.

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One of the most encouraging reports comes from western Alaska, where the salmon season is now in full swing. In the important Bristol Bay area, famous for its choice red salmon, the pack is expected to reach a million and a half cases, or about three times the amount packed last year.

Fresh fish came into Seattle in larger volume than for several years, totaling 31,000,000 pounds, compared with 23,000,000 for the same period in 1942. Chief items in Seattle's fresh fish landings are halibut, sablefish, ling cod, rockfishes, and sharks, all caught by the halibut fleet on offshore grounds, and miscellaneous local species of which flounders are among the most important.

California mackerel receipts were down to 9,000,000 pounds from the 10,300,000 pounds landed in the first half of last year. First half production of this fishery normally represents only about one-fifth of the annual production. The California mackerel fishery has shown a steady decline for the past three years; 1940's total catch was 120,200,000 pounds, in 1941 this fell to approximately 77,500,000 pounds, and in 1942 was down to 54,200,000.

Maine receipts, other than herring, are estimated at 30,000,000 pounds. For the same period of 1942 the landings totaled 31,900,000 pounds. Maine herring production figures are not yet available. In good years the landings of this species almost equal the combined production of all other species caught in Maine.

Gulf oyster receipts were about equal to last year's figures: 689,491 barrels against 698,700. Hard crabs from this section fell to 3,780,915 pounds from 5,751,046.

The nation's most important fishery, as far as poundage is concerned, that of the pilchard or California sardine, was closed for most of the first six months but production in the January-March period was 88,904 tons, a substantial increase over the 69,443 tons landed in the same months of 1942. The pilchard season opens again August 1 in the northern ports of California.

U.S. fisheries this year were asked to produce between six and seven billion pounds of marine products, a higher total than the industry has ever reached even under normal conditions. The industry estimated earlier in the year that unless manpower problems could be solved and a substantial number of vessels, which had been taken over by the armed services, returned or new ones made available a production of no more than 3,650,000,000 could be expected.

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